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An Essay on
Metaphor in Poetry

An Essay on Metaphor in Poetry

WITH AN APPENDIX ON THE USE OF
METAPHOR IN TENNYSON'S
IN MEMORIAM

BY

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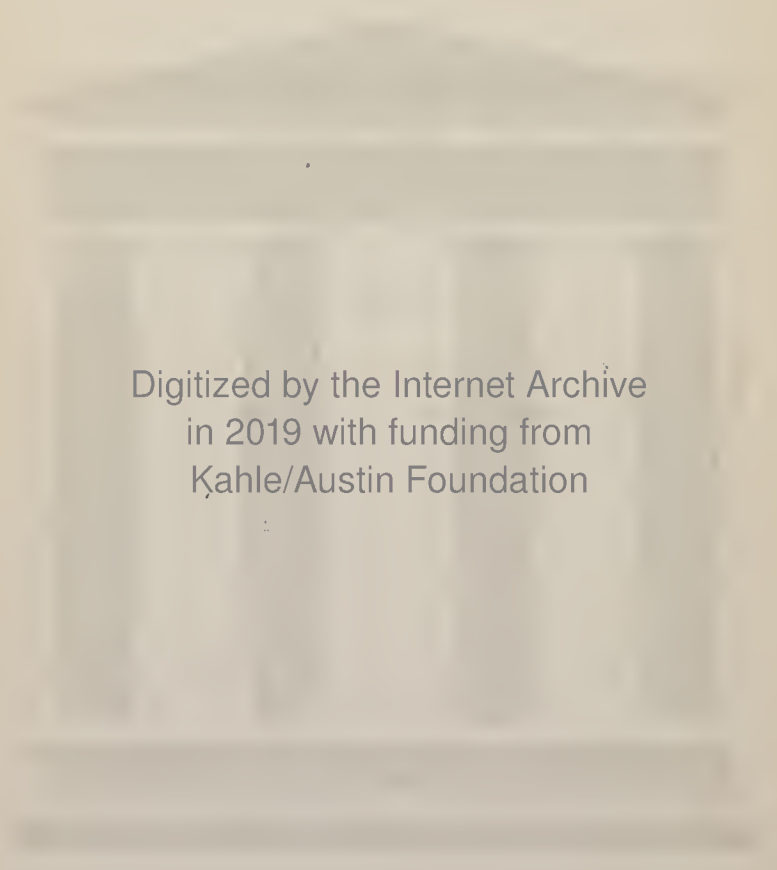
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Short swallow-flights of song, that dip
Their wings in tears, and skim away.

In Memoriam, XLVIII, iv.

The glory of the sum of things
Will flash along the chords and go.

In Memoriam, LXXXVIII, iii.



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AN ESSAY ON METAPHOR IN POETRY

§ I

IN the 21st chapter of his *Poetic* Aristotle defines metaphor as "the transference of a word to a sense different from its proper signification". Four kinds of metaphors are distinguished by him, namely, those in which the transference is made (1) from the *genus* to the *species*, (2) from the *species* to the *genus*, (3) from *species* to *species*, and (4) according to the *analogous* (κατὰ τὸ ἀνάλογον). So far as the first three kinds are concerned the classification is sufficiently simple. The nature of the last is not so clear. In the *Rhetoric* (Book III, ch. x) also Aristotle describes the fourth kind of metaphor as "those according to analogy (κατ' ἀναλογίαν)", and in the *Poetic* (ch. xxi) he further explains his meaning: "I call it the analogous,

when the relation of the second term to the first is similar to that of the fourth to the third; for then the fourth is used instead of the second, or the second instead of the fourth". The distinction between this and the third kind will need examination later.

As a specimen of the first kind of metaphor, that is, transference from the *genus* to the *species*, Aristotle quotes from the *Odyssey* (I, 185) a line, which translated runs thus: "(in yonder port) my vessel *stands*"—"for to be moored", he adds, "is a *species* of standing". The use of the generic term "sea" for the specific or particular term "wave" may be adduced as affording a clearer example, as also "vessel" for "ship", "iron" for "weapon", "dust" for "body". The figure is more commonly known as that which substitutes the whole for the part.

As a specimen of the second kind of metaphor, that is, transference of the *species* to the *genus*, Aristotle quotes from the *Iliad* (II, 272) a line thus translated—"Odysseus has achieved ten thousand valiant deeds"—"for", he adds, "ten thousand is a great number, and is now used instead of many"; in other words, a specific number is used instead of a term indicating a large number generally. The sub-

stitution of the word "sail" or "keel" for "ship", of "roof" or "hearth" for "house", or "wing" for "bird", may be clearer examples. This is the reverse of the first kind of figure, and is generally known as the substitution of the part for the whole.

In a consideration of the nature and uses of metaphor in poetry neither of these first two of Aristotle's types need detain us long. Aristotle, we see, uses the term metaphor in a wider sense than we do. For us now a metaphor is a verbal change which is founded always upon resemblance, and as such must come within Aristotle's third and fourth kinds. As has been pointed out by the critics, his first two kinds of metaphors are now classed under the head Synecdoche, a term which signifies the taking of a part for the whole, or the reverse. With figures of these two types the present discussion is not concerned. They have their value. The second type is in most frequent use in poetry, and often adds delightfully to vividness of description. The use of the first, which is less frequent, reverses the process and substitutes the vaguer for the more exact description, sometimes doubtless with a gain in massiveness or dignity. But both are marked off very clearly as belonging to another class

than metaphor in the modern sense, the metaphor proper. The movement of thought in their case is one either of diminution or of increase, and not a transfer as in the case of metaphor proper. The movement in the one case may perhaps be described as down or up, whilst that in the other case is from side to side; the one vertical, the other horizontal.

We have then to deal only with Aristotle's third and fourth classes—transference from species to species, and transference according to analogy. The distinction between these two classes is not made clear by the philosopher. One must doubt whether one species can be used for another except on the principle of analogy or resemblance, that is to say whether Aristotle's third and fourth kinds of metaphors are not ultimately one. Speaking of the third kind he says (*Poetic*, ch. xxi)—“(A transference) from species to species is such as—‘Drawing off his life with the brazen (sword)’, and, ‘cutting with unwearied sword’. For here”, he goes on, “to draw means to cut, and to cut means to draw; for each is a kind of taking away.” Perhaps what we are to understand is that in the first quotation the action of a person, namely “to draw off”, is attributed to an inanimate object, a weapon, the phrase being

used instead of the more logically appropriate verb "to cut"; and, by the reverse process, in the second quotation the action of an inanimate object, namely "to cut", is attributed to the personified "tireless sword", instead of some such personal action as the drawing off of life as though by the spirit of the weapon.

In the *Rhetoric* (III, xi) the philosopher says: "Homer has in many places employed speaking of inanimate things as animate by a metaphor", and the examples of this use given, as follows, are parallel with those above: "Back to the plain still rolled the *shameless* stone" (*Odyssey*, XI, 598); "the arrow *flew*" (*Iliad*, XIII, 587); "*Eager* to wing its way" (*Iliad*, IV, 126); "(spears) stood in the ground *eager* to taste of flesh" (*Iliad*, XI, 574); and "through his breast sped the *impetuous* spear" (*Iliad*, XV, 542). These personifications, however, prove to be examples of the fourth kind of metaphor according to Aristotle, for he goes on immediately to say—"These (Homer) has brought in by the metaphor according to analogy; for as the stone is to Sisyphus, so is he who is insensible of shame to the person in regard to whom he is shameless". Of the fourth kind of metaphor, it will be remembered, Aristotle has written that "the relation of the second

term to the first is similar to that of the fourth to the third, for then the fourth is used instead of the second, or the second instead of the fourth”.

In the personification of the “shameless stone”, however, as well as in the other personifications above, it would appear that two of the four terms necessary in “metaphor according to analogy” are not expressed or directly implied, but merely indirectly implied or involved. The two expressed or directly implied are, in the first personification, the stone and a shameless person; the two remaining terms involved are Sisyphus labouring under the burden of the stone and anyone suffering under insolence, but this second pair is only indirectly implied by the personification in Homer’s text. In another example of the third kind of metaphor it would appear that only two of the four possible terms are expressed or directly implied. The example is much commended by Aristotle (*Rhetoric*, III, x) —“for, when the poet calls old age ‘stubble’, he produces in us learning and knowledge by means of the (common) genus, for both are past their prime”; that is both are species of one genus. The second pair of terms here remotely involved are perhaps life and the

harvest. As life is to old age, so is the harvest to stubble; so that one could, in Aristotle's vein, not only speak of old age as the stubble of life, but of stubble as the old age of the harvest, thus using "either the fourth term instead of the second, or the second term instead of the fourth". But this example Aristotle distinctly places in his third kind, as its effect is gained "by means of the common genus". Numerous examples of metaphors of the fourth kind are given both in the *Poetic* (ch. xxi) and in the *Rhetoric* (Bk. III, chs. ii, iii, iv, x, xi), and the differentiation between them and those of the third kind would appear to be the direct or indirect implication of the second pair of terms, as mentioned above. Perhaps the best of the examples given are those in which evening is described as "the old age of day" and old age as "the evening of life, or, as Empedocles calls it, the setting of life" (*Poetic*, XXI), and the saying attributed to Pericles "that the youth which had perished in the war had vanished from the city as if one took the spring from the year" (*Rhetoric*, III, x). In each of these cases the four terms stand out clearly, being expressed or directly implied.

As regards these four terms and their relations Aristotle says (*Rhetoric*, III, iv): "The

metaphor from the analogous ought always to admit of paying back (i.e. being inverted, as in the comparisons of old age and evening above), both in other cases, and in that (of species) of the same genus"—thus expressly applying the same rule to metaphors from species to species. It does not appear that Aristotle would, if pressed, have dwelt upon the mutual exclusiveness of his third and fourth classes. Indeed his first three kinds—(1) from the genus to the species, (2) from the species to the genus, and (3) from species to species—are exhaustive; the only possible variety remaining being that from genus to genus, which, since every genus is itself a subdivision of a more comprehensive aggregate, is merely nominally different from the third kind. In strictness, therefore, Aristotle's fourth kind of metaphor does not differ from the third as the first, second, and third kinds differ from each other. It thus becomes apparent that the fourth kind is a subdivision or variety of the third. In the examples which he gives of the third kind, it has been noticed, only two terms are given or directly implied, e.g. the *drawing off* and the *cutting*, though the two remaining terms are indirectly involved and easily supplied, e.g. the person who draws off and the sword which cuts; or take another

example, on which we have dwelt already, that of *stubble* and *old age*, in which the third and fourth terms, viz. the harvest and life, are readily suggested. In Aristotle's examples of the fourth kind all four terms are plainly presented, e.g. in "the evening of life" and "the old age of day", "the youth of the city" and "the spring of the year". In it two pairs of terms, each pair being capable of expression in a possessive phrase, are clearly placed by comparison before the imagination. In the simpler examples given to illustrate his third kind the nouns in the possessive case, as it were, are omitted, though it is possible to supply them by an independent effort of the imagination. The metaphor of the "shameless stone" (*Odyssey*, XI, 598), for instance, implies the stone and its burdensomeness, and the oppressor and his shamelessness, and that of the "impetuous spear" (*Iliad*, XV, 542) implies the spear and its flight, and the warrior and his zeal; the second and fourth terms being in each case interchangeable. If one examines, indeed, the examples of Aristotle's first three kinds of metaphors one sees that they are all simple, and the fourth kind alone is complex.¹ A passage in

¹ Cf. *Rhetoric*, III, xi, 11: "Similes also are in some way approved metaphors; for they always are expressed in two terms, like the ana-

Quintilian's *Institutes of Oratory* (Bk. VIII, ch. vi) throws light on this distinction. "Tropes", he writes, "occur not only in single words, but also in thoughts and in structure of composition: those appear to me to have been in error who have thought that there are no tropes but when one word is put for another." The distinction made here by Quintilian exactly corresponds to the differentiation made above, and sufficiently explains Aristotle's indifference to his first three kinds of metaphor and his high commendation of the fourth kind. "Of the four kinds of metaphors," he says, "those kinds are the most highly approved metaphors which are constructed according to analogy" (*Rhetoric*, III, x)—in other words, on similarity in complexity. He does not analyse this superiority; he states it as self-evident and passes on.

Before turning from Aristotle let us glance for one moment at his rules for the construction and use of metaphors. Meagre as they are they have not been much improved upon by his successors, for though the world's literature is full of the most consummate beauty introduced by

logical metaphor; so, the shield, we say, 'is the cup of Ares'; the bow, 'a stringless lyre'. Thus one speaks complexly (λέγουσιν οὐχ ἀπλοῦν); whereas calling a bow 'a lyre' or a shield 'a cup' is simple (ἀπλοῦν)."

the agency of metaphors, theory and analysis here seem to have lagged behind practice and construction, and the nature and function of metaphor retain much of their mystery still. Metaphor is to be found everywhere and permeates all literature. It is not indeed the spirit of poetry itself, but it is the very atmosphere of the land in which that spirit breathes and roams. But that which is to be found everywhere is not necessarily that which is best understood. Aristotle's rules (*Rhetoric*, III, ii) do not lay claim to any artistic subtlety, and it must be remembered that they were expounded primarily for orators, whose instrument, intended for rapid use upon somewhat commonplace material, is necessarily less refined than that of the poets. Firstly, he lays down, "It is essential to use only such . . . metaphors as are appropriate; and this will depend on their being constructed on analogy, otherwise they will appear unsuitable". Secondly, "if you wish to enhance the subject, it is necessary to fetch the metaphor from such things in the same genus as are better; and if to disparage it, from such things as are worse". Thirdly, "there will be a fault in the syllables, unless there be evidence of pleasant sound", that is unless they be euphonious. Fourthly, "metaphors should

not be far-fetched". And fifthly, "they should have beauty", and beauty of words, he goes on to show, lies either in sound, or force, or appeal to the eye or other sense. Of these rules it may be said that they carry us but a little distance—at best to points whence we may get, afar off, glimpses of the land of poetry, its plains and rivers, its sunshine and travelling storm, its soaring mountains and embosomed vales.

In the *Institutes of Oratory* Quintilian distinguishes (Bk. VIII, ch. vi) synecdoche and metaphor, and deals under the latter head only with figures which Aristotle places in his third and fourth classes, that is with metaphor in the modern and contracted sense of the term. "Metaphor has been invented", says the Roman rhetorician, "for the purpose of exciting the mind, giving a character to things, and setting them before the eye; synecdoche is adapted to give variety to language, by letting us understand the plural from the singular, the whole from a part, a genus from a species, something following from something preceding; and vice versa." Having stated that tropes occur not only in single words but also in complex notions, he goes on to speak of "that species of trope which is both the most common and by far the most beautiful"—the metaphor. He distin-

guishes three kinds of uses of metaphor. "This change we make", he says (VIII, vi), "either because it is *necessary*, or because it adds *force* (significance), or because it is more *ornamental*." As illustrations of the above he adds: "From *necessity* the rustics speak of the 'gemma' (bud) of the vines (for how else could they express themselves?), and say 'the corn thirsts' and 'the crops suffer'; and so we say that a man is 'hard', or 'rough', because there is no proper term for us to give these dispositions of mind. But we say that a man is 'inflamed with anger', or 'burning with desire', and has 'fallen into error', with a view to *force* or significance of expression. . . . The expressions 'luminousness of language', 'illustrious birth', 'storms of public assemblies', 'thunderbolts of eloquence', are used merely for *ornament*, and it is thus that Cicero calls Clodius in one place 'a source' and in another 'a harvest and a foundation' of 'glory' to Milo." In this threefold distinction of the uses of metaphor, into the necessary, the forcible, and the ornamental, we may recognize an advance in the analysis of the subject; and in the unqualified isolation of metaphors used for ornament or beauty only there is a decided gain, as also in the distinction of the necessary metaphors of common speech.

His analogies of the kinds of metaphors, as distinguished from the uses, however, may without injustice be characterized as little more than mechanical. Of kinds of metaphors Quintilian finds four. He is therefore apparently more minute in his analysis than Aristotle, who subdivides metaphor proper, as we have seen, into only two classes, his third and fourth kinds—which on examination prove to be distinguished only by simple and complex comparison respectively. Quintilian's four kinds are as follows: (1) When one sort of thing is put for another; (2) when one inanimate thing is put for another; (3) when inanimate things are put for things having life; (4) when things having life are put for things inanimate. These four, he writes, may be distinguished into more species, and words may be transferred—(1) from one sort of rational animal to another; (2) from one irrational animal to another; (3) from the rational to the irrational; and (4) from the irrational to the rational. And, he adds, words may be transferred “from the whole of a thing to a part, or from the part to a whole”—there-with returning to synecdoche and the first two classes of Aristotle.

In Quintilian's analysis of the uses of metaphor we may find, as has been said, special value

in the distinction between the necessary and ornamental uses of metaphors, the intermediate use, namely, that which adds force or significance, being not so clearly defined, or indeed readily distinguishable from the ornamental. These two outstanding uses correspond sufficiently to the late Professor Max Müller's "radical" and "poetical" metaphors. Max Müller (*Science of Language*, 2nd Series, Ch. VIII, "On Metaphor") points out that—"the fact that all words expressive of immaterial conceptions are derived by metaphor from words expressive of sensible ideas was for the first time clearly and definitely put forward by Locke,¹ and is now fully confirmed by the researches of comparative philologists". "Metaphor", he adds, "is one of the most powerful engines in the construction of human speech, and without it we can hardly imagine how any language could have progressed beyond the simplest rudiments. . . . No advance was

¹ Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (III, i, 5): "I doubt not, but if we could trace these to their sources, we should find in all languages the names which stand for things that fall not under our senses, to have had their first rise from sensible ideas". Similarly, Victor Cousin, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy during the 18th Century* (Paris, 1841, Vol. II, p. 274), also quoted by Max Müller—"Analogy is the law of each growing or developed language. Hence the metaphors to which our analysis traces back most of the signs and names of the most abstract moral ideas."

possible in the intellectual life of man without metaphor." And again—"Language has been a very good housewife to her husband, the human Mind; she has made very little go a long way. With a very small share of such material roots as we just mentioned, she has furnished decent clothing for the numberless offspring of the Mind, leaving no idea, no sentiment, unprovided for, except, perhaps, the few which, as we are told by some poets, are inexpressible". He then proceeds to distinguish between two kinds of metaphor, which he calls *radical* and *poetical*, and illustrates them by examples. "I call it *radical* metaphor when a root which means to shine is applied to form the names, not only of the fire or the sun, but of the spring of the year, the morning light, the brightness of thought, or the joyous outburst of hymns of praise. Ancient languages are brimful of such metaphors, and under the microscope of the etymologist every word almost discloses traces of its first metaphorical conception." In this we may find the equivalent of Quintilian's "necessary" use of metaphor. It is here also that we may seek for elucidation of the fact to which Jean Paul Richter refers, that "no nation called error light, or truth darkness". "From this", continues Max Müller,

“we must distinguish *poetical* metaphor, namely, when a noun or verb, ready made and assigned to one definite object or action, is transferred poetically to another object or action. For instance, when the rays of the sun are called the hands or fingers of the sun, the noun which means hand or finger existed ready made, and was, as such, transferred poetically to the stretched-out rays of the sun”. Max Müller’s two kinds of metaphors may then be said to correspond respectively to Quintilian’s first and third uses (the necessary and the ornamental); and if Quintilian’s second use (the forcible) is a legitimate subdivision it may also be included under Max Müller’s second head. It is upon the former of these that Max Müller as a philologist chiefly dwells; it is with the latter, or metaphor in poetry, that this essay is concerned.

Apart from the significant fact that Longinus includes the subject of metaphor in his treatise *On the Sublime*, the actual remarks on the matter by this great writer, as far as they have come down to us, scarcely add to those of his predecessors. It would appear indeed that the gap in the text preceding the passage on metaphor (Sections 31–32) implies the loss of Longinus’ opening observations on the subject,

whilst the next gap deprives us of the remarks on comparisons and similes. Professor Saintsbury in his *History of Criticism*—to which mine of learning I am greatly indebted—remarks with characteristic vivacity that the latter lacuna is “a gap where the demon has interfered with less malice than usual”; but here it seems allowable to disagree. “Neighbouring on metaphors,” says Longinus (Section 37), “for we must go back to these, are comparisons and similes, differing from them only in the following respect. . . .” The writer of the treatise *On the Sublime* might have given us something upon this portion of his subject worth our meditation. It is to be noted, however, that he associates metaphor with the sublime, and this by itself may be taken as adding to the analysis. There are five different sources, he says (Section 8), of sublimity of style, and of these the fourth is diction—“noble phraseology, of which the subdivisions are choice of words, and use of tropes and elaboration”. And after adducing instances from Xenophon and Plato, he says (Section 32): “these suffice to show how grand in their nature tropical expressions are, and how metaphors produce sublimity”.

Later systematic writers on figures of rhetoric during the scholastic ages, and their

spiritual descendants, from the days of the Frankish empire onwards, add little or nothing to the analysis of the subject by the great classical authorities, whom for the most part they follow. Those who are curious may find a characteristic survey of the subject from this point of view in the *Elements of Criticism* by the Scots critic, Henry Home, Lord Kames, first published in 1761, and still appealing to the public in 1839 at least, when the eleventh edition was issued. So far as they touch the subject of metaphor, they deal, like their predecessors, with verbal rather than constructive metaphor, that is, with metaphors in isolation rather than in constructive relationship with their contexts. The old reproach may be levelled against them. They seem to teach nothing but how to name their tools. In other words, their work in this matter is analytic, but without synthetic or constructive force. None would judge from them that in proportion as you eliminated metaphor from poetry you would take away, as has been said above, not indeed the spirit of poetry but the atmosphere of poetry, its power to move and breathe with joy, and ultimately perhaps to live. The scope of this essay does not admit of mention of any but positive contributions to the subject.

A remark of Samuel Johnson on metaphor justifying his own style against an objection of Lord Monboddo, brought to his notice by the faithful Boswell, is full of suggestion—"as to metaphorical expression, that is a great excellence in style, when it is used with propriety, for it gives you two ideas for one" (Boswell, Ch. XLI, a. 1777). This is a decided contribution to the subject, but the Doctor himself did not develop the remark, and it fell apparently upon somewhat stony ground. Its truth is self-evident, when the attention has once been drawn to it. Metaphor whilst conveying one idea raises another simultaneously before the mind. The place and function of the added idea are, however, not so evident. Some luminous and suggestive remarks bearing on this point may be found, as might be expected, in Coleridge's critical writings, though they were not written directly upon the subject of metaphor, but upon that of imagination. Describing the Shakespeare of the *Venus and Adonis*, he says (*Lectures* of 1818, Section I): "He had as unequivocally proved the indwelling in his mind of imagination, or the power by which one image or feeling is made to modify many others, and by a sort of fusion to force many into one;—that which afterwards showed itself in such might

and energy in *Lear*, where the deep anguish of a father spreads the feeling of ingratitude and cruelty over the very elements of heaven;—and which, combining many circumstances into one moment of consciousness, tends to produce that ultimate end of all human thought and human feeling, unity, and thereby the reduction of the spirit to its principle and fountain, who is alone truly one. Various are the workings of this the greatest faculty of the human mind, both passionate and tranquil. In its tranquil and purely pleasurable operation, it acts chiefly by creating out of many things, as they would have appeared in the description of an ordinary mind, detailed in unimpassioned succession, a oneness, even as nature, the greatest of poets, acts upon us, when we open our eyes upon an extended prospect. Thus the flight of Adonis in the dusk of the evening:

Look! how a bright star shooteth from the sky;
So glides he in the night from Venus' eye!

How many images and feelings are here brought together without effort and without discord, in the beauty of Adonis, the rapidity of his flight, the yearning, yet hopelessness, of the enamoured gazer, while a shadowy ideal character is thrown over the whole! Or this power acts by im-

pressing the stamp of humanity, and of human feelings, on inanimate or mere natural objects:

Lo! here the gentle lark, weary of rest,
From his moist cabinet mounts up on high,
And wakes the morning, from whose silver breast
The sun ariseth in his majesty,
Who doth the world so gloriously behold,
The cedar-tops and hills seem burnish'd gold.

Or again, it acts by so carrying on the eye of the reader as to make him almost lose the consciousness of words,—to make him see everything flashed, as Wordsworth has grandly and appropriately said,—

Flashed¹ upon that inward eye,
Which is the bliss of solitude;—

and this without exciting any painful or laborious attention, without any anatomy of description, (a fault not uncommon in descriptive poetry)—but with the sweetness and easy movement of nature. This energy is an absolute essential of poetry, and of itself would constitute a poet, though not one of the highest class.” And again referring to the *Venus and Adonis* (in *Lectures and Notes on Shakespeare and*

¹ This is inaccurately quoted, for “They flashed”, from the poem of 1804 on the Daffodils.

Other English Poets, ed. 1897, App. I), Coleridge says: "Scarcely less sure, or if a less valuable, not less indispensable mark

Γόνιμον μὲν Ποιητοῦ . . .
 . . . ὅστις ῥῆμα γενναῖον λάκοι,

will the imagery supply, when, with more than the power of the painter, the poet gives us the liveliest image of succession with the feeling of simultaneousness!

With this he breaketh from the sweet embrace
 Of those fair arms, that bound him to her breast,
 And homeward through the dark laund runs apace:

.
*Look! how a bright star shooteth from the sky;
 So glides he in the night from Venus' eye.*

Venus and Adonis, l. 811."

The poet-critic is writing of the faculty of imagination and not directly of metaphor or simile, but his poetic examples of the exercise of the faculty are similes and metaphors, and his luminous suggestions may serve as a point of departure for the theory developed in the following pages.

§ II

LET us turn from the critics to the unconscious practice of the poets themselves. And first let us dwell on the fact that all metaphor, that is metaphor in the modern sense, implies analogy or resemblance—a resemblance or analogy in which the poets obviously delight; and let us ask ourselves why they delight in resemblance and why we delight in it with them. The secret of this pleasure is not at all open or obvious. The perception that two or more things are alike does as a rule, indeed, give pleasure; but it does not in the least follow that this pleasure has usually anything whatever to do with poetic feeling. It is connected usually with a certain logical satisfaction, the satisfaction that arises in the mind from the perception of system and order, the satisfaction that comes from classification, from the sense of an extension or confirmation of the realm of knowledge and a corresponding diminution of or conquest of the realm of the unknown. It is for the

most part—that is, so far as the use of comparison is analytic and classifying rather than constructive and unifying, which latter side of the subject will be dealt with later (p. 63)—purely logical, rationalistic, or scientific, and as such has nothing to do with poetry, the essential characteristic of which is its emotion, as opposed to logic and reasoning. Clearness, vividness, illumination, it may be said, are gained by comparisons such as those with which we are dealing, and these, it may be maintained, are poetical requisites. Clearness of illustration, it should be replied, is essentially logical in its nature; and therefore, though no one wishes to exclude it from poetry any more than one wishes to debar the poets from the use of correct grammar and rational thought, such clearness of illustration is not the secret of the poets' pleasure in and need of those metaphors without which apparently they can hardly give expression to any of the varied emotions struggling within them to find form and utterance. It is this same distinction perhaps that Quintilian points out in the differentiation between his second and third uses of metaphor—the difference between its use as adding “force (significance)” and its use “because it is more ornamental”. It is with that which primarily

brings delight that we are concerned in poetry, not with that which brings primarily clearness; and though clearness and delight may often "mix in one another's arms to one pure image" of poetic pleasure, the distinction yet remains and must be insisted on, the one being logical in its nature and the other emotional. The marked preference of at least the modern poets for metaphor rather than for simile perhaps illustrates this contention. Metaphor and simile are equally comparisons, "for the simile", as Aristotle says, "is metaphor with the addition (of a word denoting comparison), on account of which it is less pleasing, because more at length" (*Rhetoric*, III, x).¹ But in the case of the simile the introducing word "like" or "as" emphasizes and enforces the similarity and puts the illustration in the clearest light, whereas in the metaphor the illustration is decidedly if not deliberately obscured. There is a certain pause, a certain coldness, introduced by the formal introductory word; clearness comes in with it, but something of warmth goes out. Hence doubtless the poetic preference for the metaphor, at least in modern times, a preference shared by the acute intellect of Aristotle and recommended by him to orators in the passage above, though the philosopher

¹ Cf. also *Rhetoric*, III, xi, 11.

says elsewhere that "the simile is useful also in speaking, though seldom, for it is poetical" (*Rhetoric*, III, iv)—a remark doubtless influenced by the long and beautiful similes of Homer. The elaborate similes that beautify the pages more especially of the epic poets have, however, been largely displaced in poetic favour by the metaphor, which heightens the mood whilst the simile too often checks it—a difficulty which, speaking generally, is partly obviated by the use of simile as introductory and leading up to the warmer mood, when it could not with any maintenance of the emotion follow it.

Clearness of illustration, then, is a logical, that is a prosaic, beauty, and is not the aim of the poet. To test further the truth of this conclusion let us choose a metaphorical passage from the poets for examination. In the following passage from Shelley's *Skylark*, beginning—

All the earth and air
With thy voice is loud,
As, when night is bare,
From one lonely cloud
The moon rains out her beams, and heaven is over-
flowed—

metaphors and similes are mingled, but the very similes, despite the apparent definiteness of

comparison implied in their necessary form, appear to denounce any intention of clear illustration. The famous succession of comparisons which follows must be specially examined.

What thou art we know not ;

What is most like thee ?

From rainbow clouds there flow not

Drops so bright to see

As from thy presence showers a rain of melody :—

Like a poet hidden

In the light of thought,

Singing hymns unbidden,

Till the world is wrought

To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not :

Like a high-born maiden

In a palace tower,

Soothing her love-laden

Soul in secret hour

With music sweet as love, which overflows her bower :

Like a glow-worm golden

In a dell of dew,

Scattering unbeholden

Its ærial hue

Among the flowers and grass, which screen it from the
view ;

Like a rose embower'd

In its own green leaves,

By warm winds deflower'd,
Till the scent it gives
Makes faint with too much sweet these heavy-winged
thieves.

Sound of vernal showers
On the twinkling grass,
Rain-awaken'd flowers,
All that ever was
Joyous, and clear, and fresh—thy music doth surpass.

Simile after simile, and metaphor after metaphor! Why does Shelley pour forth before us such a wealth of comparisons? Is it in order to make quite clear to us by means of illustration what the song of a skylark actually sounds like? If so, do the illustrations draw us in the least nearer to the point? It is surely self-evident that those who have never heard the skylark will never know what its triumphant pæan is like from any number of comparisons whether with moonlight, or poets, or high-born maidens, glow-worms, roses, or rain; and that for anyone who has heard the bird of a spring-day, at "Home", in our sea-girt islands, the comparisons are totally unnecessary to bring back the memory of the little creature's melodious cries. Shelley knew all this as well as anyone else, and clearness of illustration had evi-

dently nothing whatever to do with his purpose.

Poetry is in its essence emotional, not logical. There is as yet no satisfactory definition of poetry. But the true definition of poetry when at last it is made will have to include the statement that poetry is an expression of emotion through words. Much will still be left to be said after that; for all verbal expression of emotion is not necessarily poetic—much of it, indeed, is essentially unpoetic and vile. The whole relation of poetry to beauty, of thought and sight and sound, and to truth, remains undefined. But this, however, stands forth clearly—that words without emotion, whatever else they are, are not poetry. The use of metaphor similarly is not poetic, unless it be an emotional use. A logical use, for the purpose of appealing to the understanding, to bring out points of likeness clearly, to classify, to illustrate, excellent as this may be in its proper place, is altogether remote and alien from poetic usage.

It would indeed be difficult to find clear examples in English poetry of what may be called the illustrative or explanatory use of metaphor, or even of simile.¹ No good passage, I think I may venture to say, will afford

¹ Prose examples are given below, pp. 60, 69.

such an example. Those who cannot accept this statement will at least agree that the purely illustrative use, that is the use of metaphor which does not contribute some element of beauty as well as that of clearness, is rare in poetry. They will probably admit that beauty in metaphor is essential, whereas clearness of illustration is not. And indeed the statements of poetry are perhaps never so abstract and recondite as to require clear illustration by example, such as is frequently necessary or at least advantageous in prose.

If then the logical value of comparison in poetry is little or nothing, what is its emotional value? Poetry is, as has been said already, a verbal expression of emotion, based upon truth and beauty. The emotion is caused by the contemplation of this manifold universe in which we live, and beyond which we cannot even in thought for a single moment go. Emotion so caused in certain gifted natures finds its fit expression in poetry. With the exact relations of poetry to truth and beauty we need not here concern ourselves. That there is some such relationship all will acknowledge, and to truth as well as to beauty the poet is in some measure bound. Now what is the first and most striking characteristic of this universe in which we live,

and from which we cannot escape even in thought for a moment, and the contemplation of which arouses in the poet's mind the emotions expressed in the poet's verse? Surely, its overwhelming complexity—its manifoldness, its variety, its awful ranges of height and depth, its endless vistas of space and time, defeating thought alike in its immeasurable totals and in the infinite smallness of its factors—behind which lies ever unrevealed the One, that unity which shows itself to us only in endless complexity. And to a clear vision this complexity is as patent in the part as in the whole, in a single scene as in the whole survey of the heavens, in a single mind as in the whole of humanity, in a tree or flower as in a human being. Whatever the degree of truth necessary in poetry, it seems clear that this complexity of the universe and of all that is in it must find some representation in poetry. The complex world can be truly depicted only by a complex portraiture. This is the case not only with so-called descriptive poetry—and indeed it may be doubted whether anything approaching formal or minute description can be poetry—not only with the poetry of the outer and visible world, but with the poetry of the inner world of the feelings also, for the inner world depends upon,

and is inextricably involved with, the outer. Now it is obvious that the metaphorical is not only a pictorial but a complex method of speech; and as such it is peculiarly fitted to enable the poet to express adequately the emotions aroused in him by the contemplation of this our various universe.¹

Metaphor is indeed a double language, giving you, in Samuel Johnson's words, "two ideas for one", and by means of metaphor the poet can bring up delightfully, without a suspicion of philosophical pedantry, scene after scene to complete and to correct the partial nature of the action or theme which has his main attention. Thus, to use the words of Coleridge in the passage to which reference has been made above, metaphor "gives us the liveliest image of succession with the feeling of simultaneousness". While retaining the unity of the subject and of the moment, it presents us simultaneously with other and connected thoughts, "creating out of many things, as they would have appeared in

¹ Cf. Carlyle, *On Heroes*: "On this point many things have been written, especially by late German critics, some of which are not very intelligible at first. They say, for example, that the poet has an *infinitude* in him; communicates an *Unendlichkeit*, a certain character of 'infinitude', to whatsoever he delineates. This, though not very precise, yet on so vague a matter is worth remembering." (*The Hero as Poet.*)

the description of an ordinary mind, detailed in unimpassioned succession, a oneness, even as nature, the greatest of poets, acts upon us, when we open our eyes upon an extended prospect". As by a landscape all things are presented to the consciousness together in one sweep, so by poetic metaphor the complexity of the world is borne in upon us whilst the attention is not diverted from the main theme. As the world is one and manifold, so metaphor presents unity and diversity simultaneously, pointing out similarity and at the same time adding diversity. Difference in unity is the characteristic of the universe, and this the double nature of metaphor renders it peculiarly fitted to represent. Metaphor may be compared to a background, ever shifting, ever varied, before which the visions of the poets pause or move. It may be said also to stand to the main theme of a poem as does the harmony to the air in music, enriching and enhancing it inexpressibly. And as in the history of music the former has developed during the course of the ages, so apparently it may be said, in the history of literature, has the use of poetic metaphor developed.

The meaning and use of all those metaphors and similes in Shelley's *Skylark* seem to me

now to stand unveiled. It was not to make clear to us what the song of the skylark actually sounded like that Shelley heaped comparison on comparison. Nothing whatever can make that clear to us except the song of the little being itself. But as the poet listened to the English bird's sweet cries, or as he dwelt upon them afterwards in recollection—to use Wordsworth's distinction—fair thoughts of other things, surrounding and allied with these, poured in upon his mind. Whilst the bird sings over some fresh inland field or hill-side in England, the waves still lap or thunder round our white island shores, which the green seas keep inviolate; night pursues day; good and evil, joy and pain, beauty and horror, wage their eternal warfare; and the world still surges forward on its voyage through the unfathomable to the unknown. And so the poet's changing metaphors bring up before us, in sweep after sweep, around the enraptured bird and the sunshine of English fields, clear night with the lonely moon; spring day with rain-clouds and the bow; the dull low world of men amidst whom and for whom the poet-prophet strives and suffers and haply perishes; fair palaces and music and the love of women; dim night and glow-worms and the dewy grass; the languor

of summer and its roses ; and once again fresh spring, and its showers and wet herbage. Of such is the world in which we dwell. Shelley does not say this in philosophical terms. He merely depicts the world as he sees it, and I cannot imagine how he could have brought together all this variety of thought and scene undidactically otherwise than by the marvellous agency of metaphor and simile. So also with the passage instanced by Coleridge from the *Venus and Adonis* :—

Look! how a bright star shooteth from the sky ;
So glides he in the night from Venus' eye!

Coleridge points out how “images and feelings are here brought together without effort and without discord”, but strangely enough omits from the enumeration of these the splendour of the nightly heavens which the comparison brings in, to the immeasurable enhancement of the truth and beauty of the scene. The starry universe is the background of the stage on which we play our several parts, and here by the force of the metaphor alone the vision is strengthened and pierces beyond the puppets to the divine frame of things. The “Æonian music measuring out the steps of Time” comes to us softly here through the accompaniment

of metaphor, whilst the air which is the main theme is heard, rising simple and clear.

We may take other instances. The following, from the *Iliad*, IV, 422 foll., is the simile preceding the description of Diomedes' attack upon the Trojans. "As when on the loud-sounding shore a wave of the sea, followed fast by others, rushes beneath the impulse of the West Wind; and first it crests itself upon the sea, but then breaking on the land it roars aloud, and surging high round the rocks overhangs, and spews forth its salt foam; so then the Greeks" rushed on the foe. Here, in spite of the precision of comparison which the simile necessarily brings, the gusto with which the poet describes the waste of rushing waters, cresting themselves far out at sea in long succession and breaking in foam and fury away, shows that he loved these things for themselves and not for any likeness to the ranks of battle array. To the narrow plain of Troy they add the wide spaces of the Western sea, the thoughts of ships and still other struggles of men besides those that they wage with one another. The comparison enriches the scene with a noble background; it does not illustrate the picture of the ranks of charging men.

Let us take the following passage, from the

beautiful chorus of Bacchantes commencing with l. 862 of the *Bacchae* of Euripides, thus translated by Professor Gilbert Murray:—

Will they ever come to me, ever again,
 The *long long* dances,
 On through the dark *till the dim stars wane?*
 Shall I feel the dew on my throat, *and the stream*
Of wind in my hair? Shall our white feet gleam
 In the dim expanses?
 O, *feet of* a fawn to the greenwood fled,
 Alone in the grass and loveliness;
Leap of the hunted, no more in dread,
 Beyond the snares and the deadly press:
 Yet a voice still in the distance sounds,
A voice and a fear and a haste of hounds;
 O, wildly labouring, *fiercely fleet*,
 Onward yet by river *and glen*. . . .
Is it joy or terror, ye storm-swift feet? . . .
 To the dear lone lands untroubled of men,
Where no voice sounds, and amid the shadowy green
 The little things of the woodland *live unseen*.

I have ventured to italicize the words representing ideas brought in by the English rhyme or metre, because though they illustrate still further our subject, they are the work of the poet-translator not of Euripides. The English additions indeed are brought in with much skill and beauty, but I cannot refrain from remarking, *en passant*, that if metaphor and simile

supply, as I maintain, the poet's background to his main subject, the very greatest caution must be used in reproducing that background upon the new stage afforded by a foreign language. Thus in the translation above, the "stars" are an added touch—delightful as nearly all mention of the stars must be, but not made here by Euripides, who calls up only the "dark" or "night"; whilst the "stream of wind" is a less legitimate addition, as neither wind nor stream, lovely as both are, is in the Greek poet's picture; and finally (not to pursue a side issue too earnestly) the "feet" are apostrophized, that is, personified, by the English poet alone, with a mystical effect which seems to me opposed in spirit to the lovely precision of outline in the original Greek. In the Greek the latter part of the passage (l. 7 onward) is not an apostrophe but a simile, and the simile seems to me to be brought in entirely for its own sake, for delight in its successive pictures of fawn and green meadow, the snares and the hunters and the baying of hounds, flight swift as wind, the river and plain, and then solitude, and the shady branches of trees. These we owe to the simile; and the resemblance of a Bacchic woman to a fawn is as nought compared with them, is merely the justification for the mention of that

wider and lovelier Greece that surrounded Thebes, where the tragic story of Pentheus found its scene, and Athens, where the assembled city watched the theatre enact his fall.

Take the following passage from the *Æneid* (XII, 473 *seq.*), in which the nymph Juturna is described as driving her brother Turnus through the pursuing host of Æneas: "As when some black swallow flies through the mansion of some rich man and brushes the high walls with her wings, gathering her small food for the noisy nest to eat, and now screams in the empty colonnades, and now around watery pools; so Juturna is borne in the car through the midst of the foe". Here the very remoteness of the likeness emphasizes the fact that the Mantuan poet was dreaming amidst Rome of country scenes rather than endeavouring to illustrate his martial subject, and wisely did not forbear to speak of peace amidst war. War is not all. Even though thousands die, the swallows build, and Nature pursues her ways.

Again from Virgil take the following comparison of the souls of the dead to leaves in autumn (*Æneid*, VI, 309 *seq.*):—

Quam multa in silvis autumni frigore primo
Lapsa cadunt folia—

a simile which neither Dante nor Milton nor many another true poet has been able to resist adapting, and which certainly was not new when Virgil used it, with all the love of the woods in his heart. The late Professor Palgrave, to whose delightful *Landscape in Poetry* I am much indebted, comparing Virgil and Dante in their treatment of this picture, writes: "Vergil's comparison is simply between the numbers of the leaves and of the souls preparing to enter Charon's boat. Dante adds to this a larger, a more picturesque, an almost subjective treatment: *As in autumn the leaves lift themselves off one after the other, until the branch sees on the earth all its spoils.*"¹ Yet those who love nature as it is, rather than as it might be, will probably prefer the earlier poet's picture here. "As many as the leaves in the woods that at the first cold of autumn fall and lie." The heart is borne away by the words, back from all fancied realms of the dead, back from all fears of hell, back from all imaginings of the poets, from all books and subtle refinements, straight to the mother breast of Nature, where we may lie at rest, filled full with her love and with

¹ Come d'autunno si levan le foglie
L'una appresso dell'altra, infin che il ramo
Vedu alla terra tutte le sue spoglie.—*Inferno*, III, 112.

peace and the sense of ease, while the leaves fall around us, and the year draws to its close, and we with our mother fare on towards whatever end be ours. The woods in autumn; if metaphor or simile bears us back to these and to the natural world, divinely strange and moving, that surround us whilst we forget, then it has served a sufficient and necessary purpose. Those who have slept in the open air through nights in a southern climate will know how the universe expands to the view during the minutes before sleep falls. During those minutes one has poised upon the hand of infinitude; infinite space above, and infinite space below, and all the worlds rushing silently upon their courses. Shut up in a chamber, the mind is limited by its walls and roof and floor. Poetry by the aid of metaphor widens the vision and brings us back to reality and truth, as do those moments preceding sleep under the warm and open sky. Dante's metaphorical additions to the simile here perhaps rather defeat than aid this end, by some overcrowding of the canvas. The leaves "lift themselves", whether as birds or spirits, and the branch "sees" the fallen leaves, both being thus personified.¹ And finally the leaves are

¹ Aristotle has pointed out that personification is a form of metaphor—
(c 802)

described as the spoils of the branch, with the further addition of pictures of war, defeat and rapine, and the grief of the vanquished.

The following from the *Paradiso* (XX, 73), rendered in Dean Plumptre's translation, is a simpler and truer example from Dante; describing souls in heaven at peace:

As is a lark that cleaves at will the sky,
First singing loud, then silent and content
With that last sweetness, that doth satisfy.¹

The poetic purpose stands out clear. It is here the lark, not the content of heaven, that claims the mortal heart of the poet, and the resemblance is his excuse for turning his eyes back to the warm earth that bore him.

In the preceding examples taken from the older poets I have chosen similes rather than metaphors, partly because the simile was more favoured by ancient poets than the metaphor (cf. Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, III, iv), and still more because in the case of a simile there can be no

see *Rhetoric*, III, xi, where he writes: "Homer thus has often employed the speaking of inanimate things as animate, by way of metaphor", adding the following examples—"Back to the plain still rolled the shameless stone" (*Od.* XI, 598); "the arrow flew" (*Il.* XIII, 587); "eager to wing its way" (*Il.* IV, 126). Cf. p. 58 below.

¹ Qual lodoletta, che in aere sì spazia
Prima cantando, e poi tace contenta
Dell' ultima dolcezza, che la sazia.

dispute that a picture is intended, and that it assists in the formation of a background, whereas the degree of insistence intended to be laid upon a metaphor may be doubted, especially when the language used is a foreign or an extinct one. Moreover, metaphor would appear to have been used with less conscious artistic purpose by the ancients than the more formal simile. A survey of the Greek and Roman literatures is beyond my scope, yet I venture to suggest that it will be found that metaphor abounds more in Greek poetry than in Latin, and that this abundance is one of the causes of superiority in the former. Among the moderns metaphor is not only frequent but, at least in the better writers, fully conscious.

In his essay on Coleridge, prefixed to the selection of his poems in Ward's *English Poets*, Walter Pater quotes from Shakespeare's *Henry VI*, Part II, a supreme instance of metaphor. The passage is from a speech of the King. Pater writes: "Of what is understood by both [Coleridge and Wordsworth] as the imaginative quality in the use of mere poetic figures, we may take some words of Shakespeare as an example:—

My cousin Suffolk,
My soul shall thine keep company to heaven:
Tarry, sweet soul, for mine, then fly abreast.

The complete infusion here, of the figure into the thought, so vividly realized that though the birds are not actually mentioned yet the sense of their flight, conveyed to us by the single word 'abreast', comes to be more than half of the thought itself;—this, as the expression of exalted feeling, is an instance of what Coleridge meant by Imagination." "This sort of identification", continues Pater, "of the poet's thought, of himself, with the image or figure which serves him, is the secret, sometimes, of a singularly entire realization of that image, which makes this figure of Coleridge's, for instance, 'imaginative':—

Amid the howl of more than wintry storms,
The halcyon hears the voice of vernal hours
Already on the wing."

Spring and the rush of wings, not the halcyon amid conventional storms; wide heaven and the flight of birds, not any journey to heaven, filled here the poets' minds. The metaphor is not only, in Pater's words, "more than half of the thought itself", it raises the thought in each case into the wide and ethereal spaces of poetry.

From the modern English poets metaphors may be culled on all sides. They are like our

delightful fields, profusely full of flowers that spring out of the natural bounty of the soil. These, however, I must now in haste pass by.

Few more delightful examples could be found than the two from Tennyson's *In Memoriam* placed at the head of this Essay. The first may be compared with Virgil's simile, quoted above from *Æneid*, XII. The impulse of the East Anglian poet to describe the swallow is the same as that of the Mantuan. It is plainly sheer delight in our tiny fellow-creature and the scenes she haunts, rather than any real resemblance between her swiftly turning flight over summer pools and the numerous short collections of stanzas into which *In Memoriam* is divided that moved the English poet to these lovely words. The resemblance is sufficient to justify the delightful picture of the metaphor, no more. The other example from the same poem placed before this Essay is more complex. The whole Section (LXXXVIII) from which it is taken is one elaborate metaphor bound up with the simple statement that into the midst of the poet's grief the sense of God's good universe will come.

Wild bird, whose warble, liquid sweet,
Rings Eden thro' the budded quicks,

O tell me where the senses mix,
O tell me where the passions meet,

Whence radiate : fierce extremes employ
Thy spirits in the darkening leaf,
And in the midmost heart of grief
Thy passion clasps a secret joy :

And I—my harp would prelude woe—
I cannot all command the strings;
The glory of the sum of things
Will flash along the chords and go.

The nightingale, the Garden of our first parents, spring, the woods and night, music, and the gleam of moon or meteor or stars—of such is that world, the sense of whose divine beauty bursts into his sorrow and scatters it with light. The comparison of the grieving poet to the nightingale is hackneyed and by itself brings no pleasure; the picture of beauty that it introduces is here doubly pleasing, both by reason of its own loveliness and because of its exemplifying that force which breaks the poet's sorrow down.

How the metaphor grows to excel in importance in the poet's mind the theme which it is supposed to illustrate may be seen from another example from *In Memoriam* (cxxi):—

Sad Hesper o'er the buried sun
And ready, thou, to die with him,

Thou watchest all things ever dim
And dimmer, and a glory done :

The team is loosen'd from the wain,
The boat is drawn upon the shore ;
Thou listenest to the closing door,
And life is darken'd in the brain.

Bright Phosphor, fresher for the night,
By thee the world's great work is heard
Beginning, and the wakeful bird ;
Behind thee comes the greater light :

The market boat is on the stream,
And voices hail it from the brink ;
Thou hear'st the village hammer clink,
And see'st the moving of the team.

Sweet Hesper-Phosphor, double name
For what is one, the first, the last,
Thou, like my present and my past,
Thy place is changed ; thou art the same.

He who was sad is glad, but yet is faithful to his lost friend—this statement occupies only one line out of the twenty lines of the section, and the rest speak through metaphor of the beauty of the world which abides around us.

One more example of this type I wish to take, as it illustrates the thesis particularly clearly. It is from Matthew Arnold's poem called *The Future*. The metaphor is one of the

oldest in the world, and is the property of all poets.

This tract which the river of Time
Now flows through with us, is the plain.
Gone is the calm of its earlier shore.
Border'd by cities and hoarse
With a thousand cries is its stream.
And we on its breast, our minds
Are confused as the cries which we hear,
 Changing and shot as the sights which we see.

And we say that repose has fled
For ever the course of the river of Time.
That cities will crowd to its edge
In a blacker, incessanter line;
That the din will be more on its banks,
Denser the trade on its stream,
Flatter the plain where it flows,
 Fiercer the sun overhead.
That never will those on its breast
See an ennobling sight,
Drink of the feeling of quiet again.

But what was before us we know not,
And we know not what shall succeed.

Haply, the river of Time—
As it grows, as the towns on its marge
Fling their wavering lights
On a wider, statelier stream—

May acquire, if not the calm
Of its early mountainous shore,
Yet a solemn peace of its own.

And the width of the waters, the hush
Of the gray expanse where he floats,
Freshening its current and spotted with foam
As it draws to the Ocean, may strike
Peace to the soul of the man on its breast :

As the pale waste widens around him,
As the banks fade dimmer away,
As the stars come out, and the night wind
Brings up the stream
Murmurs and scents of the infinite sea.

That is to say, in prose, the thoughts and nature of each generation of men are limited by environment. The freshness and simplicity of early ages are gone, we ourselves live in an era of increasing stress and commercialism, and some think that the lot of future generations will be even more unenviable, while some still hope for the best. The long succession of pictures in the poem, whilst it immeasurably beautifies, by no means renders clearer its thought; although indeed by its very complexity the poem with its metaphors of river and sea traffic, of mountain, shore, and sky, is truer to the world which is the subject-matter of our fears and hopes, than the prose equivalent which dis-

cards all but the main thought and presents this in isolation.

Though most of the metaphors and similes cited above have brought in nature as the background to human lives, this is not necessarily the order of the relationship. Personification is a species of metaphor, and in its more cursory form—to be distinguished carefully from that deliberate personification which is mythopœic or pantheistic in its nature, and which differs from the cursory form in some respects as simile does from metaphor¹—the human element is used, if not exactly as a background, yet as a complement to the forces of nature described, thus often greatly heightening the scene. The passage quoted above from the *Inferno* (III, 112)—“As in autumn the leaves lift themselves off one after the other, until the branch sees on the earth all its spoils”—may be cited as an example; as also the following from *In Memoriam* (xv), in which the poet, awaiting the arrival of the ship bearing his dead friend, describes the rising storm, and speaks of his own wild unrest that dotes and pours “on yonder cloud”—

That rises upward always higher,
And onward drags a labouring breast,

¹ Cf. p. 49 above, and Appendix, p. 88.

And topples round the dreary west,
A looming bastion fringed with fire—

thus bringing in by a succession of momentary personifications pictures of human labour, misery, and war, and heightening the horror of the coming storm by the sense of men's sorrows and crimes.

Prose, as a type, is logical and, in its purity, takes everything abstractedly. It is the language of reason, and places its subject in a dry white light. It eliminates the irrelevant, and makes cautious statements about the subject actually under discussion, setting steadily aside everything that is not directly to the point. The poetic method is emotional and is the direct contrary of this. The world as it is felt is its subject. The world analysed and reasoned on is the subject of typical prose. Each portion of the subject is as far as possible isolated by the prose writer, and so the realm of thought is mastered piecemeal. In poetry all things are brought together again, as in the world itself, where unison and not isolation is the rule, and complexity not simplicity prevails. Logical, or what I have called typical, prose cools the mind to the temperature of pure reason; poetry fires all the emotions as does life itself. Where

both processes are so necessary it is useless to speculate which is the finer, but one may venture to point out that the synthetic process of poetry sometimes attains, it would seem naturally, to a fuller statement of the truth than the analytic method of prose. Examples may make clearer what I mean. Let me take a modern example, from John Stuart Mill's treatise *On Liberty*. The passage is from the introductory chapter. I have purposely chosen a passage in which metaphor is used, as the very figures illustrate the analytical nature of the prose writer:—

“In old times . . . the rulers were conceived (except in some of the popular governments of Greece) as in a necessarily antagonistic position to the people whom they ruled. . . . Their power was regarded as necessary, but also as highly dangerous; as a weapon which they would attempt to use against their subjects, no less than against external enemies. To prevent the weaker members of the community from being preyed upon by innumerable vultures, it was needful that there should be an animal of prey stronger than the rest, commissioned to keep them down. But as the King of the vultures would be no less bent upon preying on the flock than any of the minor harpies, it

was indispensable to be in a perpetual attitude of defence against his beak and claws."

We have here vultures, harpies, and the flock, as well as a King of vultures, against whose beak and claws the flock takes up a perpetual attitude of defence. These figures of speech can, surely, only have been introduced as illustrative and explanatory, and even if they were brought in for beauty it is obvious that the whole passage is analytical, and its purpose is to extricate the main idea from all extraneous matter, and to set it before the reader for observation in a clear dry light. With this may be compared the method of Wordsworth's famous sonnet on a kindred subject:

Two voices are there; one is of the sea,
One of the mountains; each a mighty voice: •
In both from age to age thou didst rejoice,
They were thy chosen music, Liberty!

—which is another way of saying that insular and mountainous positions have always been favourable to the political independence of small States. These are the first four lines of the octave, and the poet has in them already drawn-in a spirit world of awful power, the roar of the sea, and the cry of the winds among the mountains. Of such is our world, and not as

represented in the abstractions, useful and necessary as they are, of the prose writers. Let us take one more sonnet of Wordsworth's to illustrate the point. It is on *Mutability*, or in other words that dissolution to which everything, high or low, must sooner or later come, a subject sufficiently abstract and philosophical:

From low to high doth dissolution climb,
And sink from high to low, along a scale
Of awful notes, whose concord shall not fail;
A musical but melancholy chime,
Which they can hear who meddle not with crime,
Nor avarice, nor over-anxious care.
Truth fails not; but her outward forms that bear
The longest date do melt like frosty rime,

That in the morning whitened hill and plain
And is no more; drop like the tower sublime
Of yesterday, which royally did wear
His crown of weeds, but could not even sustain
Some casual shout that broke the silent air,
Or the unimaginable touch of Time.

A picture of all earth and the heavens, the whole gamut of the same and the awful harmonies thereof; the hills covered with hoar frost of a morning beneath the rising sun; the weed-crowned ruins of the ancient town; and the unseen world of mysterious forces—these

are ideas contributed by metaphor to the main theme and greatly enriching it; and the method which permits of them is synthetic.

It has been pointed out in an earlier part of this Essay (p. 32), that the use of comparison is properly for the most part analytical, classificatory, and logical, rather than constructive, unifying, and emotional. Yet, as suggested at the time, there is also the constructive side to its use. In perceiving clearly the relations of things one comes to see something of the whole, and here emotion is apt to supervene. And it is possible that in the more elaborate analogies upon which metaphor dwells at times, such as that between Time and a river in Matthew Arnold's poem quoted above, or that of Section CIII of *In Memoriam*, the artistic mind may find a further satisfaction than that of the increased fulness and variety of presentation, which has been insisted upon above, namely satisfaction in the feeling of order and uniformity underlying the variety and complexity of the world, the sense of uniformity working within multiplicity. The idea of such underlying uniformity or unity can scarcely be contemplated without some degree of emotion, and metaphor in arousing such emotion may be still further enhancing its chief effect, which is

a full and varied presentation of the world. Take the closing lines of Shelley's wonderful *Ode to the West Wind* beginning, "Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is". These seem to illustrate both aspects of the power of metaphor, corresponding the one to the complexity of our universe, and the other to the unity which underlies this multiplicity. The poet cries out to the wind—

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:

What if my leaves are falling like its own?

The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep autumnal tone,

Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,

My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe,

Like withered leaves, to quicken a new birth;

And by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth

Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!

Be through my lips to unawakened earth

The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,

If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

Here the sense of uniform processes of which we are commonly unconscious—the likeness of the movements of the wind and of poetic in-

spiration, of forest sounds and music, of autumn and the decay of human powers, of fallen leaves and seeds and the thoughts and words of dead thinkers, the resemblance of these last again to fire, and again to the call of trumpets, and of the resurgence of our hopes for the future that we idealize to the awakening of the earth in spring—the sense that Nature is moving towards her purposes along ordered lines, occasionally revealed to us by the lifting of a curtain, as it were, is clearly to be found here and contributes to the passion of the lines. Yet it is not upon the resemblances, suggestive as they are, that the effect of the metaphors really depends. After all, an analogy has a disagreeably inartistic habit of calling up the logical faculty as well as the emotional nature, to appreciate it—a habit which often makes one wonder whether a fine simile in verse is really an appeal to one's poetic or one's prose side. The main effect of the metaphor here, as always, is in the enrichment and enhancement of the main theme with something of that profuse variety which adorns the world in which we live and from which we gather all our ideas, poetic or otherwise. The main theme is simple, almost jejune—the poet approaching death, as he believes, prays that hereafter his thoughts may spread

over the world, and that the dull and evil period in which he has lived may give place to an age of glorious freedom, which his efforts may have helped forward. That is how one sees the matter, looking at it abstractly or prosaically, carefully excluding the complexity of extraneous thoughts. The manner of Shelley and of poetry is different; extraneous thoughts are not only admitted but welcomed, and the means by which they are admitted is metaphor. And so to the original theme are added music and the forest beneath the wind, autumnal leaves and the seeds that seek the womb of the earth, the altars of an ancient priesthood flaming heavenward, the drowsing of earth through winter, the shrill trumpet blasts of the great leaders of men, and the awakening of the world in Spring.

That the methods of poetry are concrete or pictorial is universally acknowledged. What I wish to lay stress on is that the concrete style necessitates variety of pictures, and that poetry depends for this variety chiefly upon metaphor. Metaphor finds its real *raison d'être* in the perfect ease and grace with which it introduces and unifies the variety required by poetry, not merely for its pleasing effect but for its essential truthfulness. Take these scattered lines from George Meredith's *Love in the*

Valley, perhaps the sweetest love-poem ever written :

When at dawn she wakens, and her fair face gazes
Out on the weather thro' the window panes,
 Beauteous she looks ! like a white water-lily
Bursting out of bud on the rippled river plains !

and—

Heartless she is as the shadow in the meadows
Flying to the hills on a blue and breezy noon ;

and—

Brooding o'er the gloom, spins the brown evejar.
Darker grows the valley, more and more forgetting ;

and—

Love that so desires would fain keep her changeless ;
Fain would fling the net, and fain would have her
 free.

How could these fair thoughts have been brought in without spoiling, except by metaphor ; and what further function does metaphor need than to bring such in ! Without metaphor they could but have been patched on. But metaphor assures some degree of likeness or affinity, implying to this extent appropriateness in the mention of beautiful extraneous ideas.

And if this is so the greatest care obviously must be exercised in controlling and ordering the variety thus secured. The variety must be not merely varied but really appropriate. As in music variety of sound is dominated by harmonics, and as in painting variety of colour is dominated by the laws of æsthetics, less exactly understood indeed than those of harmony yet equally potent, so a similar dominion prevails in metaphor. As in the case of colours, the laws may not be clearly understood, but the breach of them is punishable and is sooner or later fatal to the offender. Metaphor raises its pictures before the mind, and picture must blend with picture, as note with note, and colour with colour. The great German, Goethe, has said that architectonics, the power of building in due proportion, distinguishes the author from the amateur. The remark applies perhaps more to the province of metaphor than to any other part of literature. I do not for a moment imply that great metaphor must necessarily be long and elaborate; it may obviously on the contrary be brief and fleeting. What I do say is that metaphors brought into contiguity should be in some further relationship than that of mere juxtaposition, and that in the lesser writers this further relationship is often wanting. In Quin-

tilian's *Institutes of Oratory* occurs the following brilliant passage (Bk. VIII, ch. v) upon a closely allied subject, the use of *sententiæ* or striking phrases. The translation used is that of Professor Saintsbury, and is taken from his *History of Criticism*. "If sentences [striking thoughts] are too crowded they get in each other's way, just as, with all crops and trees, nothing can grow to a proper size if it lacks room. Nor does anything stand out in a picture where there is no shading; so that artists, when they deal with many things in one canvas, leave spaces between them lest shade and object fall together. Moreover, this same profusion cuts the style too short; for each stands by itself (or, comes to a halt), as there is, as it were, a fresh beginning after it. Whence the composition becomes too disjointed, consisting not of integral members, but of separate scraps, inasmuch as these things, each rounded and cut off from the rest, refuse conjunction (or, are unable to lean upon each other). Besides, the colour of the speech becomes, as it were, spotty with blotches, bright indeed, but too many and too different. For though a selva and fringes of purple, in their proper place, light up the gown, a garment speckled with patches of colour is certainly unbecoming. Wherefore, though these

sentences may seem to flash and to strike in some sense, yet there are lights which may be likened, not to flame but to sparks amid smoke; they are not even seen when the whole speech is luminous, as the stars themselves cease to be visible in sunshine. And, rising only with fitful and feeble effort, they are but unequal, and, as it were, broken, so as to attain neither the admiration due to things eminent nor the grace of a close uniformity." In this passage, scintillating with wit, the Roman critic was probably illustrating the very faults he censured, and the figures are overcrowded and inharmonious to distraction, though it must be borne in mind that their purpose is prosaic and strictly illustrative.

As an example of architectonic power Keats's famous sonnet *On first looking into Chapman's Homer* can scarcely be excelled in its kind. The imagery is varied delightfully, and is yet completely harmonious. The chief comparisons liken the works of the great poets to the opulent coasts and islands of the older world, to the rich new world discovered by Columbus, Pizarro, and Cortes, and to the starry heavens; and in these pictures the minor pictures find delightful place. And meanwhile both hemispheres, and all the heavens, are brought within our view.

Much have I travelled in the realms of gold,
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
That deep-browed Homer ruled as his demesne:
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific—and all his men
Looked at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

One may contrast with the delightful instinctive skill displayed by Keats the style of the famous closing section of George Meredith's *Modern Love*:

Thus piteously Love closed what he begat:
The union of this ever-diverse pair!
These two were rapid falcons in a snare,
Condemned to do the flitting of the bat.
Lovers beneath the singing sky of May,
They wandered once, clear as the dew on flowers:
But they fed not on the advancing hours;
Their hearts held craving for the buried day.
Then each applied to each that fatal knife,
Deep questioning, which probes to endless dole.
Ah, what a dusty answer gets the soul
When hot for certainties in this our life!—

In tragic hints here see what evermore
Moves dark as yonder midnight ocean's force,
Thundering like ramping hosts of warrior horse,
To throw that faint thin line upon the shore!

This is a highly characteristic and most imaginative passage; yet it may be safely said that there is here practically no architectonic power displayed. Let us leave aside minor confusions of figure, such as the picture of Love "closing" what he has "begotten", that of falcons in a snare flitting, and that of feeding on the hours as they advance. There seems to have been practically no consideration on the part of the poet of the relationship of the several pictures to each other. It would be altogether arbitrary to maintain that this relationship should be obvious or even close. The world is multiform and various, and, as has been repeatedly said, metaphor is especially an aid to the presentation of this very variety; and yet the notes struck upon this great instrument should not be struck by chance, and, however novel or even weird in their succession, must dwell sufficiently long in one key, and moving from that should move only among keys sufficiently akin. Take these in their order, and we have in immediate succession pictures of closing, begetting, snared falcons, flitting bats, the sky singing, dew, feed-

ing, the advance of the hours, buried days, probing knives, hot pursuit with dusty result, and waves thundering like hosts of warrior horse. With what relief one comes to the last four lines with their nobly developed figure of the midnight ocean charging for ever to the shore; a figure, by the way, which returns agreeably to the scene of the preceding section, in which the husband finds the dying wife and is reconciled with her at last—

He found her by the ocean's moaning verge,
Nor any wicked change in her discerned.

The satisfaction that arises from this trace of architectonic power in the passage is itself a testimony to the necessity of this power in poetic as in all other art.

Propriety of metaphor, then, should be judged quite as much by the relationship of the several figures to the *tout ensemble* of the background before which appears the main idea of any particular passage of a poem, as by the close resemblance of the figurative object to the thing described. Such resemblance is indeed the justification for the introduction of the figure and the bond which unites the complex parts of an imaginative passage into one satisfying whole. I do not wish in any way to decry the necessity

for such resemblance, and indeed without a high degree of resemblance a metaphor must obviously be worse than futile. Yet the formation of a background, suitable, varied, delightful or awe-inspiring, as is the background before which we all move and have our being, is not one whit less important, and the relation of each metaphor to the whole background must be considered, just as much as the relation of each note in music to all other notes in the phrase in which it occurs.

In its simplest form this precept might take shape as the rule against mixed metaphors. But it is really more, for its unit, within which the relations of metaphorical expressions to each other are to be considered, is not the single clause, or even the sentence, but the whole passage or section, however the limits of that may be decided.

Some of the greatest poets of the world have indeed broken even the rule against mixed metaphors. Take perhaps the best-known instance of Shakespeare's sins in this respect:

To be, or not to be: that is the question:
Whether 't is nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them?

“To take arms against a sea of troubles!” And yet all the shafts of ridicule aimed against this famous passage have glanced aside or broken. And I take it that its survival is due at least partly to the magnificence of the figurative picture as a whole. Fortune outrageous with her slings and arrows, the suffering man as rebel daring her in arms, and the stormy sea as background to the mortal conflict—that is a combination which the world deems worth keeping, even though some weakness in the verbal links may be revealed by criticism.

In the use of metaphor it is, first and foremost, the *tout ensemble* that matters. Propriety or resemblance in the case of each comparison is indeed requisite, but a figure to be poetic needs something beyond this; it must blend with all other figures in its neighbourhood to form a changing background representative as far as may be of the variety, the beauty, and the majesty of our world. Want of space precludes me from examining the usages of the poets in this respect historically, but it would be interesting to watch the degrees by which the harmonics or architectonics of metaphor have been developed. Here the cases of the metaphor and simile are different, for simile is by its nature formal and deliberate, and so com-

paratively infrequent, whilst metaphor is by nature rapid and evanescent, and it is the very manner in which one metaphor flashes forth and blends with or fades into another that is the point in question.

But not only must the *tout ensemble* of the figures be considered, the artistic relations of the whole figurative background with the main picture are plainly of equal importance. Of such relationship no finer example perhaps could be found than the famous passage, in Book VIII of the *Iliad*, lines 555 to 565, describing how the Trojans, pressing on their besiegers, awaited morning, before the attack upon the Greek lines. Tennyson's well-known translation is here used:

And these all night upon the ridge of war
Sat glorying; many a fire before them blazed:
As when in heaven the stars about the moon
Look beautiful, when all the winds are laid,
And every height comes out, and jutting peak
And valley, and the immeasurable heavens
Break open to their highest, and all the stars
Shine, and the shepherd gladdens in his heart:
So many a fire between the ships and stream
Of Xanthus blazed before the towers of Troy,
A thousand on the plain; and close by each
Sit fifty in the blaze of burning fire;
And eating hoary grain and pulse the steeds,
Fixt by their cars, waited the golden dawn.

The stars, the moon, the hills, the shepherd, nature at peace in wide regions far beyond the sounds of war—these blend with and immeasurably ennoble the pictures of the camp-fires on the Trojan plain. Remove the figure, and the scene closes in, narrows itself to meagre proportions, and loses that romantic beauty which never fails in the actual world or in the poet's mind, and whose abiding place in the world is as much our surroundings as ourselves, and in the world of poetry as much the metaphorical background as the subject proper of the poem.

With weary steps I loiter on,
 Tho' always under alter'd skies
 The purple from the distance dies,
My prospect and horizon gone.—xxxviii, i.

Oh, wast thou with me, dearest, then,
 While I rose up against my doom,
 And yearn'd to burst the folded gloom,
To bare the eternal Heavens again!—cxxxii, i.

APPENDIX

A NOTE ON THE USE OF METAPHOR IN TENNYSON'S *IN MEMORIAM*

THE tendency of poets towards the concrete is well-known and is one of their most marked characteristics. Life becomes a journey to them, and sorrow after joy presents itself as the altered sky, the future is the distance before the traveller, and grief the gathering clouds that obscure the horizon. Again, the reaction of a brave man's heart against continuous sorrow is spoken of as the rising of a bird upon strong wings, and the soul's renewed serenity appears as the bright heavens above the low clouds possessing the plains. These are figures common to innumerable poets, and their frequency is testimony to the common impulse in poetic natures. Thus in reading poetry one of the first necessities is to visualize, to see clearly every picture as it

is presented by the poet. Without visualizing the poet's words the reader in no sense has before him that which the poet had at the time of writing, nor can in any full sense share his emotions. Yet this visualizing is, in the case of modern poetry at least, with its innumerable metaphors, by no means always a simple matter. Glimpses of the poet's visions are seen by the ordinary reader at a first reading, but as a rule much remains at first if not for ever unrevealed. And the truer the artist the more his work rewards repeated perusal by the revelation of beauties that the senses were at first too busy or too blunt to detect.

Another peculiarity of the poets, and closely allied to the former, is their preference for the emotional forms of expression, or, to put it another way, their instinctive avoidance of the chill that settles on the mind along with the process of reasoning and logical statement. Metaphor is itself a gravely illogical form of expression. Life is not a journey, and joy and sorrow are not clear and cloudy weather, nor are hopes great or small our horizon, wide or narrow; but then these pictures warm the heart, and exact definitions and scrupulously logical statements, whilst very necessary for certain purposes, exclude the emotions in exact pro-

portion to their accuracy. The brave man's heart is not a bird, but the picture of the water-fowl or the eagle, cleaving with bold strokes its passage to clear skies beyond or above the clouds, conveys a sense of the value of resolute struggle against sorrow, however illogical itself as a description. Similarly, in personification, which is so inveterate a poetic habit, the poet chooses an emotional and concrete for a logical and abstract form of expression.

To Sleep I give my powers away;
My will is bondsman to the dark;
I sit within a helmless bark,
And with my heart I muse and say....—IV, i.

Sleep and the Will and Night have become persons, and the poet's will is chained in bondage, and his heart drives upon a starless sea. These are emotional ways of speech, and convey along with that which logic would express a something further. But although a logical rendering of such passages must necessarily omit that additional meaning, yet a logical rendering is quite possible, and is in some sense an equivalent; and a comparison of the poetic phrase with its logical "equivalent" seems to me often as fruitful as a comparison of the earlier and later drafts of a poem by a great artist in

words. Other ways of conveying emotion besides the indirect methods of metaphor, simile, and personification need not be analysed here.

Some grasp of the meaning and function of metaphor is essential, if not for the understanding, at least for anything approaching a real appreciation of poetic art. The detailed examination of a famous and beautiful poem such as Tennyson's *In Memoriam* would test and, I believe, illustrate the thesis set forth in the preceding Essay, namely that metaphor, being a double language, supplies a ready means whereby the poet can bring up delightfully and naturally scene after scene to complete and correct the partial nature of the action or theme which has his main attention, and so aids in affording, simultaneously with the main theme, a background as it were, ever shifting, ever varied, before which the nearer visions of the poet pause or move, as does life itself before the ever-varied universe that is its stage.

Take, for instance, the following passage :

When summer's hourly-mellowing change
May breathe, with many roses sweet,
Upon the thousand waves of wheat,
That ripple round the lonely grange (xci, iii);

where (omitting any consideration of the effects

of the personification in the first two lines) the last two lines by the use of a metaphor not only present to the reader the main picture, delightful in itself, of the fields of wheat stirring under the breeze, but also flash upon the mind the sense of the unreaped "ocean-plains" beyond our shores (ix, i), of the ἀλὸς ἀτρυγέτοιο of Homer, the sounding furrows of Tennyson's *Ulysses*. The lovely line "Long sleeps the summer in the seed" (cv, vii) is even more suggestive. Some instances of the poet's use of metaphor that seem to tell against the theory may doubtless be found in so long a poem. Take for instance the following:

Something it is which thou hast lost,
Some pleasure from thine early years.
Break, thou deep vase of chilling tears,
That grief hath shaken into frost! (iv, iii);

where the metaphor is primarily illustrative of the main statement, that is explanatory and topical, though even here, after contemplation, the sense of winter's power over our English parks and fields rises in the background and deepens the scene. If these lines tell in some manner against the contention of the Essay, the lines following immediately after them strongly support it:

Such clouds of nameless trouble cross
All night below the darken'd eyes (iv, iv),

in which the endless journeys of the clouds through the spacious regions above our narrow mansions are added to the scene. Again some metaphors seem to serve no special purpose, either as supplementing or deepening the scene or as illuminating the argument. Take for instance the whole of Section III, and especially the whispered speech of Sorrow concluding—

“And all the phantom, Nature, stands—
With all the music in her tone, .
A hollow echo of my own,—
A hollow form with empty hands”—

and the stanza immediately following the same—

And shall I take a thing so blind,
Embrace her as my natural good;
Or crush her, like a vice of blood,
Upon the threshold of the mind?—

where it would seem that the metaphors must not be pressed. Without being explanatory they appeal but vaguely to the emotions. They do not seem to supply a background, and if pressed they confuse the scene. They would appear to belong to the order of rhetorical

figures, those fleeting phrases of pictorial potentiality that find place in ordinary speech as practically decayed metaphors, and in the development of which orators so frequently raise effects unexpected and undesired. Nature is transient and so a "phantom"; but brings sweet thoughts and so is "musical", or perhaps merely returns them to the thinker and so is but an "echo"; is perhaps illusory and so "hollow", and brings no reality and so has "empty hands"; and Sorrow misleads us and so as a guide is "blind", and we should not accept such leadership and so not "embrace her", but reject it and so "crush her", feeling the weakness of despair to be comparable to "vice" such as cowardice or lust—tendencies which should be checked before they enter the mind fully, and so upon its "threshold". It cannot indeed be said that no pictures are raised here; on the contrary there are many. It must, however, be admitted that they have no unity, and that if the several metaphors are pressed the result is kaleidoscopic to a degree which the poet is not likely to have intended. Such instances may be adduced as telling against the theory that metaphor aids in supplying the background before which the main thoughts appear, as the universe we live in stands ever

behind each individual who frets or struts his hour upon the stage. Yet instances in favour of the theory seem to me to outnumber and overwhelm those to the contrary; and of the latter one may be permitted to remark that sometimes even "*bonus dormitat Homerus*". How great is the force of this metaphor—

Thou, dear spirit, happy star,
O'erlook'st the tumult from afar (CXXVII, v),

where all the nightly heavens are opened by a word!

In close accord with the use of metaphor as background representing the universe behind us all, is the habit of personification which is so spontaneous and ineradicable in poets of all ages and countries. Personification is a form of metaphor, representing the impersonal as personal and the inanimate as animate (see p. 58). The effect of the innumerable personifications of poetry is to leave the mind with the sense that the poets in some way, so far as personification is not a mere trick and convention, feel themselves constantly confronted with a spirit world unseen by man but none the less real. Wordsworth may be cited as affording perhaps the clearest examples of such a conviction. The sense of personality everywhere

in nature is strongly expressed in his delightful
Lines written in Early Spring—

Through primrose tufts, in that green bower,
The periwinkle trailed its wreaths;
And 't is my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.

The budding twigs spread out their fan,
To catch the breezy air;
And I must think, do all I can,
That there was pleasure there.

His longing for a sense of divinity immanent
in the world is clearly shown in the sestet to the
sonnet *The World is too much with Us*:

—Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn:
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea,
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

Not paganism, not Proteus, not Triton, are the
objects of the poet's longing, but rather these
than the sense of a world not interfused with
divinity. The innumerable personifications and
animations of poetry seem, however obscurely,
to present to the reader as a background to
everything the divineness in the universe, that
divinity which underlies and transfuses the

world and all that therein is, and in which it would almost seem that all poets of every age and clime have consciously or unconsciously believed. Instances might be multiplied without limit, but the lovely section in *In Memoriam* beginning with the apostrophe "Sweet after showers, ambrosial air!" and closing—

—till Doubt and Death,
Ill brethren, let the fancy fly

From belt to belt of crimson seas
On leagues of odour streaming far,
To where in yonder orient star
A hundred spirits whisper "Peace"

(LXXXVI, iii-iv)—

is as typical as any. The address to the ship, "Fair ship, that from the Italian shore", may be added, including the apostrophe to the heavens and winds—

Sphere all your lights around, above;
Sleep, gentle heavens, before the prow;
Sleep, gentle winds, as he sleeps now,
My friend, the brother of my love (ix, iv)—

where we have not only the attribution of super-human personality to the phenomena of nature, but that of a semi-human spirit to that which man has himself created. In such passages as

these we may perceive the ancient mythopœic faculty strongly at work as of old. And as the ancient world was able, as is the Hindu world to-day, to accept the Many as manifestations in no way conflicting with the One, so through the endless personifications of the poets comes the sense that each of these fair shapes is but the representation of the one divine power suffusing all things for the poet. It is this divinity which makes him glad, and this that makes him sing.

Personification is thus one of the poetic agencies for adding background to the scene, deepening it by the introduction of the sense of all-pervading spirit, as metaphor proper deepens it by vistas of far-distant material beauty. It is thus that personifications of abstractions and qualities, of "Sorrow in the vaults of Death", of "Knowledge", of "Wisdom", of "Science", of "Thought", of "Speech", of what one may call the Latinistic, abstract or qualitative type, as distinguished from the Grecian, naturalistic or animistic type, seem to fall so far short of the latter, for the former conflict somewhat, while the latter blend imperceptibly, with the unity which is revealed to us in nature. The former are somewhat cold and deliberate, as was the mythopœic

faculty of developed Rome, deifying moral qualities useful to the state and naming them baldly without disguise; the latter warmer and more spontaneous, seeing Gods with the early Greeks in sky and sea, in hill and stream and plain. The personifications of the Augustan school of English poetry and of the eighteenth century generally, of which Gray's

Smiles on past Misfortune's brow
Soft Reflection's hand can trace—

may be taken as an example, represent the deathlike tenuity of which the qualitative type is capable.

The world among which the figures, whether personifications or metaphors, of *In Memoriam* place the reader is a world of awe-inspiring spiritualized forces, presenting partly or wholly the Divine, as Love and Death, Chance and Time (Prologue, i, 1, and III, i, 2), with lesser animated natural powers, filling with the Invisible earth and sea and sky (II, i, 1, and x, iv, 2); of heavenly phenomena, light and darkness, dawn and eventide, sun and moon and the revolving stars, lightning, cloud and storm (Prologue, vi, 4, LI, iv, 2, LXXXIV, i, 4); and of earthly beauty in sea, lake, and stream, in mountain, chasm, and plain (XXXIII, i, 2), in spring

(xxii, ii, 3), harvest-tide (xlii, iii, 3), and winter (iv, iii, 3), in bud and flower and fruit (viii, v, 3); of man's daily life and toil and joys, his earning (xlvi, iii, 3), building (iii, iv, 4), moulding (vi, v, 2), fighting (xcv, viii, 2), ruling (xxix, i, 3), singing (i, i, 1), worshipping (lv, iv, 3), wedding (xxiii, iv, 3), begetting (xxvii, iii, 4), burying (iii, i, 2), and dying (lxxiii, iv, 1). The cumulative force of all these pictures, and their value in the poem, can hardly be overestimated. A metaphor in a single passage here, or a personification in another there, may seem of small relative importance, and its omission might scarcely be noticeable or in some cases regretted; but whether the poet wills it or not the figures that arise within his brain and interfuse themselves with his speech group themselves into a representation of his universe—all the most lovely scenes, all the most tender and moving thoughts, all the most august and awe-inspiring features of this world, rising spontaneously before his eyes and gleaming through his words wherever the main theme is not too insistent and too crowded to let the mind catch glimpses of the long vistas behind. Because these things are important, because indeed they are life, they are introduced; not primarily because they resemble other things

more or less in some particular. The resemblance permits their introduction and prevents any appearance of intrusion; that is all. For any purpose save for that of raising a background, and placing the main theme in a just *milieu*, the oft-repeated comparisons of *In Memoriam* are frankly of small value. For that supreme artistic purpose, however, they are on the whole consummate. These give the true world of the poet, the world of nature; what he places before them is often of minor importance, and indeed not seldom acquires its beauty only because it is so justly placed amid this *milieu*. The depreciation of Tennyson that one now so frequently encounters is largely due to the common inability to see again in his poems the visions amidst which he wrote them.

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